

# Experimental Central Region Multimedia Weather Briefing

## Product Description Document (PDD) National Weather Service, Central Region

### Part I – Mission Connection

- 1) **Product Description** – The Multimedia Weather Briefing (MWB) is an Internet-accessible multimedia file that provides information concerning hazardous weather events within the service area of a Central Region office. The MWB offers a combined visual/auditory platform for supporting the planning activities of emergency response partners and other key customers, as well as the general public, by conveying expected timing, location, reasoning and impacts associated with upcoming hazardous weather events, impending or current drought conditions, climate and hydrologic outlooks, etc.

A forecaster, hydro-meteorological technician, meteorologist intern, hydrologist or member of the management team may perform the task of producing this briefing. It is available on the Internet as frequently as staffing and need dictate. Prior to and during high impact events, the frequency of briefings may increase in order to adequately address the risks posed to users.

- 2) **Purpose** - The purpose of the Multimedia Weather Briefing is to serve as a decision assistance tool that can be used by emergency managers, first responders and other key decision makers. Other interested audiences may include media partners, local and state officials, law enforcement, school superintendents, spotters, and the general public. The briefing provides information concerning the specific location, timing and expected magnitude of impacts which may affect these entities.

The briefings also serve as a means of conveying probabilities and other uncertainty information, which can be utilized in risk reduction assessments that may impact preparations or actions made by our partners and customers. Preparedness information can also be communicated through the briefings, depending on the type of hazardous weather.

- 3) **Audience** – The target audience encompasses all partners and customers of Central Region offices with Internet access and multimedia playback capability. The product is available to anyone who has an Internet connection.
- 4) **Presentation Format** – The user accesses the Multimedia Weather Briefing by selecting the appropriate URL from the office's web site. The office should

make every reasonable effort to provide files that satisfy the most common media formats (see Part II).

- 5) **Feedback Method** –Central Region offices that prepare and post multimedia weather briefings will provide a link to a formal customer survey as a means of soliciting feedback on this product. The survey can be accessed through the following URL:

<http://www.weather.gov/survey/nws-survey.php?code=cr-mmwxlb>

Each participating office will establish an evaluation period of at least six (6) months, but no longer than one year, to solicit feedback regarding this service.

## **Part II – Technical Description**

- 1) **Format & Science Basis** – A wide variety of file formats may be used for rendering the Multimedia Weather Briefing, including (but not limited to) Windows Media Video (\*.wmv), Real Media (\*.ram), QuickTime (\*.mov), MPEG Moving Picture Expert Group, (\*.mpg, \*.mpeg) and Macromedia Flash (\*.swf) compression standards. The format must be able to accommodate both audio and video. The files are stored on a regional web server that distributes files to users via Hyper Text Transfer Protocol (HTTP). Users can access the videos via a determined URL on the office's web page served via the Internet. The file format must also be such that users can access the Multimedia Weather Briefing through any web browser (Internet Explorer, Fire Fox, Safari, etc.) on any operating system (Windows XP, Linux, Unix, Mac, etc.)

The files can be produced using a variety of multimedia recording and editing software sources. Camtasia is the preferred software as its output files will meet the eventual national format compliance (See Part II, Section 3). However, other software packages, such as Articulate, may be utilized in the interim to produce the audio and video files. The video programs used should be robust enough to create video files at many different levels of compression and file formats.

In keeping with regional and national IT objectives, preservation of bandwidth requirements in the creation of multimedia content is vital. Ideally, video play time will be 2-3 minutes, and should not exceed 4 minutes.

The videos are completed as needed and uploaded to the Central Region web server. After upload, the file is then available for download by customers and partners.

- 2) **Availability** – The product is available for download via hyperlink on the office's website located on Central Region web servers. A new webpage will

load with the briefing embedded in it for viewing and download. The format of the Multimedia Weather Briefing should also be globally accessible, independent of the web browser or operating system used by the intended audience.

Alternate or embedded text and an audio clip of the Multimedia Weather Briefing will be available on the same web page as an alternate to the briefing. The text summary will describe the content in each slide, and highlight the main ideas given in the briefing. A copy of the audio from the briefing will also be made available as a separate audio file (\*.mp3). The text summary and audio file are designed to meet the needs of users with disabilities, and fulfill 508 compliancy requirements.

- 3) **Additional Information** – The National Weather Service is considering a national implementation of this capability. This experimental product is designed to help facilitate that implementation with nominal change. However, the eventual MWB production methods, software, and output may differ when formal implementation is completed.